

## CHAPTER 5

# RE-INVENTING THE MRM: 2004 AND ONWARDS

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By mid-2004, the staff of the MRM, together with its trustees and a couple of its founding members, were engaged in a re-visioning exercise for the campaign, with some acknowledgement that not enough had been achieved in its first year. A great deal of energy had gone into grassroots mobilisation and facilitation work—many awareness-raising workshops were held all over the country—but the grassroots advocacy work was hard to quantify and reflect demonstrable impact. Little had been achieved in the critical arena of public communication: the MRM website describes the key operations of the MRM as being focused on communications, but few of the envisaged activities—road shows, a public relations campaign, dissemination of information promoting the visibility of the MRM—had actually materialised.

While there may have been some slow progress in clarifying the meaning of morals within the campaign itself in the period after the MRM was launched—with some convergence of ideas around the Constitution, citizenship and values rather than a religious interpretation—this clarity was not disseminated publicly.

Reflecting on its first year of operations, the MRM noted the following challenges:

- Moral regeneration remains a contested and easily abused concept.
- A common national view of what is moral and what is not is still elusive.
- Sufficient dialogue on the morality of the country is not yet taking place.
- Levels of moral intolerance remain high.<sup>52</sup>

After two years, at its first National Conference, the CEO of the MRM reported on some key shortcomings and weaknesses:<sup>53</sup>

- Fundraising was unsuccessful because “it became clear that donors wanted to fund tangible programmes in communities” (rather than contribute to the running costs of the MRM’s office).
- The capacity of the secretariat—both human resources and financial resources—was a problem. Donors did not respond positively as

anticipated, and the competencies of the staff did not meet the demands generated on the ground.

- Provincial capacity—it had been expected that provincial structures would design and implement projects; however, not many of the provincial committees were able to do this immediately and the lack of resources meant that the MRM was often not able to do much beyond launching structures and projects.
- Not many organisations or sectors that had earlier professed commitment to the MRM followed up with commitment to actually working together. This resulted in fragmented initiatives and a lack of impact.
- There is a lack of clarity about the nature of the partnership between government and civil society.
- There are no policies or positions to guide pronouncements and actions by the stakeholder organisations comprising the MRM.<sup>54</sup>

The Moral Charter which had been in the pipeline since 2002 had been delayed due to the MRM full-time staff's view that there had not been sufficient planning for the initiative and that a great deal more groundwork needed to be done in explaining the campaign to the people; and due to a number of failed attempts to design an appropriate process for the development of such a Charter.<sup>55</sup>

In a review of the effectiveness of the MRM, two key problem areas were identified. The first was a problem around leadership and co-ordination. The original idea was that the MRM would merely co-ordinate the relevant activities of the various participating sectors (e.g. government, religion, media etc.); but in practice very little happened in the sectors in the absence of vigorous leadership of the campaign. This related to the cumbersome structures that had been set up around the movement: governance and management structures representing all the participating sectors<sup>56</sup> such as government, media, civil society, and education. This led to the initial establishment of a very large board, which attempted to be inclusive and representative of all participants; and an executive committee that was not actually able to take decisions even though it was supposed to be involved in operational management.

### **Regenerating the MRM – Restructuring**

The second half of 2004 saw the MRM holding numerous workshops and consultations with stakeholder groups to review and re-invigorate the campaign. One of the key actors in this process was the NGO Business

Against Crime (BAC), which brought a new approach to the campaign, emphasising the need to focus and to demonstrate measurable results. BAC's new CEO, Kenny Fihla, is an experienced ANC politician who was able to engage with the political nature of the MRM, and to bring BAC's concerns with crime prevention and effectiveness to the process.

The composition of the governing structures of the MRM was revisited. The 'broad front' approach on which the initiative had been premised at the outset had seen many of those participants losing interest and dropping out of the campaign. As a result, MRM staff and strategists were keen to limit the important decision-making structures to involve only active and appropriately skilled participants.

In 2004 the MRM CEO proposed the creation of a series of new structures:

- Council of Patrons;
- National Working Committee; and
- Management Committee, comprising the current executive secretariat and Board of Trustees.<sup>57</sup>

She said that it had taken over a year of discussion for all the organisations participating in the campaign to agree that not all of them needed to be represented on its management structures. She proposed an annual consultative conference at which all the sectors would be represented, and a working committee made up of people who could bring relevant skills and contacts to the daily operation of the MRM.<sup>58</sup> After further discussions and workshops it was agreed that there should be an 'expert-based board', which would 'assume management oversight of the Movement, with an annual representative conference for strategising, networking and information-sharing.'<sup>58</sup> By late 2004, a new board, with largely new membership, was operational. It consisted of:

- Father Smangaliso Mkatshwa – Executive Mayor of Tshwane, ANC politician; Christian cleric;
- Moulana Ebrahim Bham – Muslim cleric;
- Rev Cedric Mayson – Co-ordinator of ANC Commission on Religious Affairs, Christian cleric;
- Ms Buyelwa Sonjica – Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry (ANC);
- Prof David Mosoma – Christian theologian and deputy Vice Chancellor, University of South Africa (UNISA);
- Ms Charlotte Mampane – SA Broadcasting Corporation (SABC);

- Ms Zandile Mdhladhla – CEO of MRM;
- Ms Thandile Nxumalo – business person (Daylite Capital);
- Ms Ellen Tshabalala – business person (SAPOS);
- Mr Mike Boon – business person (Vulindlela);
- Mr James Fitzgerald – business person (Rocketship Company); and
- Mr Xavier McMaster – Finance Manager at City of Tshwane Municipality.

At the first annual conference of the MRM the board presented a proposal on the way forward for the campaign, indicating that this new structure had indeed begun working and offering strategic direction.

### Addressing the civil society mobilisation problem

The second problem addressed within the review process was the need for tighter focus and clarity about the activities of the campaign, and more effective ways of mobilising civil society into the campaign than the broad sectoral approach that had previously been used. Both the CEO and the MRM board had acknowledged the failure of the sectoral approach to mobilise civil society enthusiasm for the campaign; and in late 2004 Zuma in Parliament again referred to the need for improved civil society participation:

In terms of obstacles, given the magnitude of the campaign and what we seek to achieve, we obviously expect greater participation, particularly at civil society level.<sup>60</sup>

At the 2004 conference the new MRM board recommended that the MRM office become more focused on advocacy work, and identified five focus areas for the organisation's activities:

- building the MRM;
- leading public discourse on moral regeneration issues;
- developing a national consensus on positive values that should be embraced;
- promoting ethical behaviour congruent with these positive values; and
- disseminating information on moral issues.<sup>61</sup>

This appears to be a new approach to the vexed question of civil society participation in the moral regeneration campaign. It is underpinned by an implicit acknowledgement that there is a need to *advocate* around the moral regeneration issues, rather than assuming (as had been the case in earlier incarnations of the campaign) that there was organic public support for these

issues. However, there is still little clarity about *how* this might be developed into a mass-based movement, and what kinds of activities are envisaged for civil society.

### Renewing the campaign within government

In parallel with the revitalisation of the MRM team in Johannesburg, national government departments based in Pretoria also began reviewing their participation in the campaign in late 2004. A task team was established by the Department of Arts and Culture, with more enthusiastic participation from other social cluster departments than had been seen for some time. The task team's role was to identify government projects that would have an impact on moral regeneration, map a way forward for government in respect of the campaign, and get the government sector 'in order'.<sup>62</sup>

This research encountered some scepticism in government circles about the work of the MRM, with various officials either suggesting that all the MRM had done in its two years of existence was to produce a charter; or that it needed to account for the money received from government in terms of the impact it had generated; or that it had been preoccupied with setting up structures and had lost momentum in respect of actual programmes. Some went so far as to suggest that government could have spent the money allocated to the MRM more effectively if specific moral regeneration programmes had been designed inside government instead of moving the campaign to civil society.<sup>63</sup>

One department that continued to assert an aggressive campaign for moral regeneration was the Department of Correctional Services, which stated in its 2004 White Paper:

The DCS believes that the moral regeneration drive will be a major contribution to the efforts that the Department is confronted with and engaged in – that of cultivating moral values to those already convicted. The creation of an environment in which offenders are encouraged to discard negative and destructive values and replace them with positive and constructive values can be said to be the core business of the Department of Correctional Services. ... All departmental programmes are designed specifically to support a regeneration of morality for those who have strayed from the accepted norms and values of society. This marks a major paradigm shift – turning prisons from centres of punishment to centres in which an environment is created for moral/spiritual regeneration to occur.<sup>64</sup>

## **Agreeing on content – The Moral Charter**

The Moral Charter initiative announced by Zuma at the end of 2002 was delayed and restarted numerous times. By late 2003 it was being portrayed as a device for “defining the vision and laying the basis and commitment for united action towards building a moral society”.<sup>65</sup> In this version, it was envisaged as emerging from a ‘participatory and inclusive process’, which would include hearings or consultations in each province, and receiving submissions from a wide range of interested individuals and organisations. This approach followed earlier failed attempts at generating a Charter, one which was to involve a questionnaire to participating organisations/sectors and contracting with a service provider who promised to raise funds for a broad consultation process.

In late 2004, an ‘expert group’ was appointed to draft a Charter. The Charter was envisaged as providing a ‘basis for defining and measuring programmes and activities’ and ‘a framework within which all the moral regeneration activity would happen’.<sup>66</sup> However, by the time of the first annual conference in late November, agreement on the content and process for the Charter had not been reached. Some provinces had held consultation workshops to identify content issues for the proposed Charter, while others had not. The Charter as such was not one of the five focus areas identified by the new board—although it will likely be pursued under the ambit of “developing a national consensus on positive values”.<sup>67</sup>